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An Early Form of Animal Sacrifice.--By CRAWFORD H. TOY, Professor in Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

MANY recent writers on religious customs have been disposed to refer all animal sacrifice to some one conception. The usual theories on the subject may be reduced to three: 1. that the victim is a substitute for the sacrificer, the sin of the latter calling for death at the hands of the deity; 2. that the victim is a gift to the god, intended to avert his anger and procure his friendship; 3. that the essence of sacrifice is the communal partaking of the body and blood of the sacred victim by the god and the man, whereby, since the animal is allied in blood to both these persons, the bond of kinship between them is strengthened and the natural friendliness of the deity is revived or increased. The view that all sacrifice is one in origin is based doubtless on the well-founded belief in the psychological unity of mankind. But psychological unity by no means carries with it unity of religious methods. The fundamental religious fact—the desire to be on good terms with supernatural Powers—may be supposed to exist the world over; but it is conceivable that different communities have adopted different modes of entering into relation with them. The diversity in the creations of savages is a familiar fact—witness their languages, so wonderfully wrought out and so different one from another in details. Along with unity in human life diversity must be admitted, and in the present stage of investigation it will be wise not to insist on deriving all sacrifice from a single source. One set of observances, at any rate, suggests a conception of sacrifice somewhat different from those mentioned above.

In his *Head-Hunters*, Mr. Haddon describes the Borneo ceremony of divination by means of a pig's liver (p. 336). The ministrant, touching the live pig with a lighted brand, prayed to the god, and then asked the pig to give the message to the god, who was requested to make known his will by means of the pig's liver. During the address the ministrant kept his hand on the animal to secure its attention; it was then killed and the liver

examined. Mr. Haddon adds that the ceremony is a common one in Borneo (Sarawak). On all important occasions information is sought from the pig—it is told not to mislead the suppliants and to convey their message to the god, and it is killed as soon as the address is finished lest the message should be altered by the pig if it knew it was to be killed. An elaborate request to the animal on the occasion of the naming of a child is reported by Mr. Haddon at length (p. 354): “O Balli Boin [spiritual or divine pig] tell Balli Penyalong [the god of child-naming] the reason of our meeting here to-day. We are here to name my child, and we request you to convey our message to Balli Penyalong . . . We trust you will approve of our performances, and we hope that blessings will come to all present who meet as friends. We also request Balli Penyalong to let us know by the inspection of your liver whether the name which we intend to give this child is suitable . . . We also employ you, O pig, for another little ceremony to which, of course, you will have no objection” [this was the reconciling of two peoples who had been quarrelling]. After the animal was killed, its blood was smeared on the breasts of the quarrellers and others of the spectators. Mr. Haddon is of opinion that in this ceremony the soul of the pig is directly addressed, and is supposed to be liberated by the death of the animal and to convey the message to the god. The natives appear, in fact, not to distinguish, so far as regards this function, between the animal and its soul—the soul is conceived of as the personality—it survives the death of the animal, goes to the other world (the world of the gods) and there enters into communication with the gods, to whom it is related in nature.

The Ainu bear ceremony seems to involve the same order of ideas. Mr. Batchelor's account of the ceremony is as follows:¹ A cub having been caught and fed till he is of the proper age, the owner invites many guests to the feast. The occasion is a great one—men and women come attired in their best, and the air is full of gaiety. The invitation runs in this form: ‘I am

¹ John Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folklore*, 1901. Mr. Batchelor is the latest writer on the religion of the Ainu; he spent nearly twenty-five years among them, and seems to have been an intelligent and careful observer. Somewhat different descriptions of the bear ceremony are quoted by Mr. Frazer (in his *Golden Bough*, ch. iii) from various writers.

about to sacrifice the dear little divine thing who lives in the mountains. Come to the feast—we will unite in the pleasure of sending the god away.’ The first step is an act of worship to all the gods. Then a man approaches the cage in which the bear is confined, asks pardon for what they are about to do, tells the bear that a great honor is to be conferred upon it, and adds that large provision of food and drink will be sent along with it. The following address (or one like it) is then made to the animal: ‘O divine one, thou wast sent into the world for us to hunt. We worship thee—hear our prayer. We have brought thee up with care because we love thee. Now that thou art grown big, we are about to send thee to thy father and mother—when thou comest to them please speak well of us and tell them how kind we have been. Please come to us again, and we will sacrifice thee.’ After this the bear is worried and finally killed—the head is cut off and taken to the east window (the sacred spot of the house), food and drink (including a cup of its own boiled flesh) and sacred shavings (*inao*) are placed before it, and it is bidden go to its parents, make a feast for many divine guests, and come back to be sacrificed again. The ‘cup of the feast’ (called also the ‘cup of offering’) containing the bear’s flesh, is then saluted and every person present, young or old, takes a little of its contents, and in like manner the flesh of the animal is partaken of by all. The bear’s head is preserved and worshipped; the spirit of the animal is believed to dwell in it.

Not only the bear but, according to Mr. Batchelor (p. 432), the eagle also is worshipped by the Ainu and dispatched in sacrifice to the world of the gods with a message of thanks to them for having governed the world of men; and it is asked to come back to earth.

Certain peoples of Eastern Siberia (the Gilyaks and the Goldi) are said to have a bear ceremony identical in some respects with that of the Ainu.¹ The bear is treated with respect and affection, in some cases worshipped, its flesh eaten, and its head regarded as sacred and as possessed of supernatural powers. The reports say nothing of sending a message by it to a god, but the close similarity of the procedure in other

¹ The authorities for this statement are given by Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ch. iii.

points to that of the Ainu leads one to suspect that such a message is sent.

In these ceremonies the victim is regarded as divine—a conception found abundantly elsewhere, belonging, indeed, to the fundamentals of savage religion. In Borneo and among the Ainu a principal motive (if not the chief motive) in killing the animal is to send it as a messenger to a god or as a representative of the people or of the sacrificer in the divine community of the other world. There is no trace of the conception of expiation of sin. The situation presupposed is that of general friendliness between the gods and man, the former, however, needing to be informed of men's wishes, and to be won over to their side. A natural method of securing the gods' good will is to send an ambassador to them, just as would be done if it were desired to conciliate a great man. The messenger must be either a human being or a beast. There are examples of the choice of a man or a woman for this purpose, but common human kindness would naturally lead to the selection of a lower animal. Besides, the messenger must be divine, and in early religion it is the beast rather than man that is commonly regarded as divine.

Such a ceremony originates of necessity in a time when the conception of the relation between gods and men is crude. The god differs from the man only in being more powerful—the desires of the man are confined to the procuring of some bodily good. If the custom continue, the progress of society will invest it with a different character. The beast will cease to be regarded as a god, and will subside into an accessory, while the god proper will grow into larger proportions ethical and physical, and the distance between man and god will be increased. It will then be no longer consonant with the dignity of the deity that an ambassador should be dispatched to him from men—the animal will be thought of rather as a gift, or there will be a vague sense of its sacredness and of the potency of the solemn ceremony connected with it. Its blood and its flesh also will continue to be regarded as having magical power.

Possibly an attenuated survival of the Borneo and Ainu conceptions is to be recognized in the Zuni turtle ceremony described by Mr. Cushing. A solemn procession of men, headed by a priest, went to the sacred city near which was the

home of the deceased members of the tribe, and returned some days later bearing baskets filled with turtles. One of the animals, brought into the house in which Mr. Cushing was a guest, was received with every mark of reverence and affection, sacred meal was scattered on its back as it crawled about, it was addressed as a kinsman, as, indeed, the embodiment of a dead relation. The man who brought it explained that, though it was to be killed the next day, it would not die, could not die—it would only go to the home of its brothers. The next day, with prayers and offerings, it was killed, its flesh and bones were deposited in the river, and its shell was preserved in the house.¹ The ceremony involves a belief in the identity of turtles and human beings—a particular instance of the widespread belief in the identity of the man and his totem animal or some animal connected with him. We may, with Mr. Frazer, call it a case of transmigration.² Mr. Frazer also suggests that the object of killing the turtle is “to keep up communication with the other world in which the souls of the departed are believed to be assembled in the form of turtles.” This seems probable, though Mr. Cushing’s narrative gives nothing definite on this point. The procedure certainly gains in intelligibility if we suppose it to be the survival of a ceremonial message to the other world.

There are also certain resemblances between the bear ceremony of the Ainu and the Uncpapa white buffalo festival described by Miss Fletcher.³ The following points may be noted: To kill a white buffalo ensures for the slayer a blessing from the gods [a special ground for this view is not stated in Miss Fletcher’s report—the belief appears to point to a time when, as among the Ainu, the act of killing was itself significant]; the man who has killed the animal makes a feast and invites a large number of persons, soup is prepared from the scrapings of the hide, and is all eaten by the men; the next day, at a second feast, the skin is rubbed with buffalo liver and

¹ F. H. Cushing, *My Adventures in Zuñi*, in *The Century* of May, 1883.

² *Golden Bough*, ch. iii.

³ A. C. Fletcher, *Indian Ceremonies*, in *Report of the Peabody Museum of Amer. Archaeol. and Ethnol.*, Cambridge, 1883; also as separate pamphlet, Salem, 1884.

brains, and is carried out and fastened to a frame, the head toward the east—later it is brought into the tent, and placed on the west (back) side; after a prayer by a priest to the Powers of earth and sky [apparently to secure good crops] the skull is placed in the centre of a square of exposed earth, and cherries and water are put beside the head of the hide (this food is explained by the Indians to be an offering to the buffalo). Next follows the solemn eating of the buffalo meat by the chiefs, pipes are presented to the hide and then to the chiefs. The hide is cut into strips which are given to the owner and to the chiefs, and are preserved as bringing good luck. Finally, the skull is laid at the foot of the sacred pole [Miss Fletcher does not say what afterwards became of it]. Doubtless parts of this ceremony are found elsewhere; but the resemblance to the Ainu ritual in the nature of the incidents and in the order of procedure is striking, and may suggest that, though no message is now sent to the Powers by the buffalo, this feature once existed.

Elements and survivals of the Borneo and Ainu ceremony are widely diffused among tribes of low grade. The conception that the spirit may be released to do certain work in a future existence is not infrequent: a slave or captive may be killed that he may carry a message to his master's friends in the Beyond;¹ a man may kill himself or another person in order that the spirit of the deceased may work harm to enemies.² The North American Redmen believe that the souls of animals slain in the chase carry reports of their human slayers to their companions of the same species; the animal about to be killed is addressed apologetically and begged (as in the Ainu ceremony) to give its friends a favorable report of the behavior of its slayers—otherwise the survivors will keep out of the way and food from hunting will be cut off or diminished in quantity. With this may be compared the California festival in which the killing of a sacred buzzard is held to insure a multiplication of the species,³ and all similar procedures. Possibly also a point of connection may be recognized between these and the obscure

¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. 458. Cf. Aen. ii. 547 ff., where Pyrrhus, about to kill Priam, gives him a message to Achilles.

² Tylor, ii. 112.

³ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ch. iii.

Australian ceremonies designed to procure a good supply of animals and plants.¹ In these economic ceremonies there is no message—in Australia no slaughter of an animal. It is difficult, however, to understand how the California ritual can be effective unless a message is sent by the slain bird to its companions. The Australian ceremony may be an attenuated form of an earlier and bloodier ritual; but on this point we are reduced to conjecture, there being at present no information about earlier Central Australian customs.

It is hardly to be expected that so early a ritual as the Aïnu message should be recognizable in the higher religions. In every sacrifice, it is true, there is the belief that the ceremony somehow gives efficacy to the prayer of the suppliant; but in the more advanced religious systems the petition goes direct from the worshipper to the deity. MM. Hubert and Mauss, indeed, in their minute analysis of a complicated Hindu ritual,² regard the victim as the mediator. Sacrificial procedure, they say (p. 133), consists in establishing a communication between the sacred world and the profane world by the intermediation of a victim, and one may charge the disengaged spirit with the duty of carrying a wish to the celestial Powers. The object of the sacrificial ceremony, they add (pp. 67, 71), is to detach the sacred soul of the victim from its profane body, and thus to complete its consecration, to 'sacrifice' the animal in the etymological sense of that term. This view is, to a certain extent, in accord with what is suggested above in this paper, but it does not appear by what steps the authors reach it. It is not given in the native ritual.³ Certainly the sacrifice is intended to procure benefit for the sacrificer, and the victim is addressed with laudatory epithets that it may not be angry and become dangerous after death—these two points may be said to be universally recognized in ancient religious usage. But the Hindu, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman rituals do not explain why the death of the animal is essential to the efficacy of the ceremony. They fail to bring out clearly

¹ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*.

² In their *Essai sur le sacrifice* in *L'Année Sociologique*, vol. ii, 1898. Their theory came to my notice after my article was written.

³ See E. W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*; H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*.

what is obvious in the Borneo and Ainu rituals, namely, that the victim is sent as ambassador to the divine Powers.

Remoter resemblances to these early rituals may be recognized in the Mexican custom of treating a human being for some time as a god, surrounding him or her with every luxury, then, after the slaughter, preserving a part of the body of the victim as a sacred and powerful thing.

The ambassadorial feature is not the only one in the ceremonies described above. There is the partaking of the flesh of the victim—the well-known procedure that has been made the basis of a theory of sacrifice. It appears to be here rather an accessory than an essential of sacrifice—an economic procedure, with a twofold purpose: to use the good food thus provided, and to gain the qualities of the sacred animal. But this theory demands a separate examination and must be dismissed here with this bare mention.

A message supposes high gods—the ambassadorial sacrifice is found only where such gods exist, that is, in a relatively advanced religious stage. It passes gradually into the more refined conception of mediation, and in the higher religions the mediators are gods, and the human ministrants of the ceremonies of mediation are priests. Only faint traces of the ancient view linger in civilized cults.